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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Office of Distribution
Washington 25, D. C.

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CIVILIAN FOOD REQUIREMENTS BRANCH MEMORANDUM NO. B-2

To: All Regional Directors

From: Norman Leon Gold, Chief
Civilian Food Requirements Branch

Subject: Standards for Community Food Preservation

In working with State agencies in planning community food preservation activities, in assisting with workshops, or otherwise carrying out our responsibilities in connection with the Community Food Preservation Program, one of our most important duties is to recommend that community food preservation centers follow only approved standards and techniques that will insure maximum conservation of our food supplies. The use of methods that result in waste and spoilage defeat this purpose. Furthermore, foods that are improperly processed endanger the health, in fact the lives, of the consumers. It behooves us, therefore, to advocate certain approved basic standards that should be followed in every community food preservation center.

A primary requirement for every center is that a trained supervisor be available during the entire period of operation. Where possible, the supervisors in the larger centers should have trained assistants who can supervise the separate operations. These assistants need not necessarily be paid workers, they should however, have adequate instruction in the operations for which they will be responsible.

It is a generally accepted fact that the only safe method of canning non-acid foods is the steam pressure method. Scientific laboratory research, carried on in the Department of Agriculture over a period of years, proves this to be true. Acid foods may be processed with safety by the boiling water-bath method. Oven canning is not recommended under any circumstances.

Acid foods which can be processed by the boiling water-bath method (at the temperature of boiling water---212° Fahrenheit) include fruits, tomatoes, and rhubarb. Non-acid foods must be processed in steam pressure equipment at temperatures of 240° to 250° Fahrenheit obtained by applying steam pressure varying from 10 to 15 pounds. Non-acid foods include all meats and such vegetables as beans, corn,

peas, asparagus, greens, okra, carrots, and sweet potatoes. Even when pressure equipment is used it is important that the proper pressure is applied for the proper length of time to insure the destruction of spore forming organisms which are extremely resistant to heat. One of these organisms, the botulinus bacterium, which produces spores or resting cells that are very difficult to kill may, under favorable conditions such as those found in canned vegetables, come out of the resting stage and grow, producing a deadly poison or toxic. The illness, often fatal, caused by eating even the smallest portion of food contaminated with this toxic, is known as botulism or botulinus poisoning.

In using the larger type of pressure equipment, such as retorts, the use of glass jars is not recommended. With such equipment considerable breakage occurs, resulting not only in loss of foods and materials, but also in creating safety hazards. The use of glass jars also reduces the capacity of a community canning center by at least one-third. Glass jars may be satisfactorily used for canning acid foods that are not processed under pressure.

Within the very near future a manual, containing detailed standards and techniques governing the operation of community canning centers, will be released to the field. It is anticipated that this manual will be reproduced in quantities sufficient for distribution to community food preservation centers. In the meantime, however, Office of Distribution representatives should make every effort to encourage the observance of the foregoing standards.

Norman C. Gold